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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
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ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
(HABITAT II)
First session
Geneva, 11-22 April 1994
Item 4 of the agenda
Preparations at the regional and global level

Note by the secretariat

Annexed herewith are the Preliminary guidelines from the Latin American and Caribbean group presented to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

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PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP PRESENTED TO THE FIRST SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE FIRST PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS.

1. The Latin American and Caribbean countries participating in the first substantive session of the preparatory committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), after examining the documents prepared by the secretariat and having participated in the plenary meetings and the working groups, consider it convenient to express the viewpoints regarding the development of this session and wish to contribute to the discussions with the following guidelines:

2. The transformation in the international order and the lack of attention to human settlements have converted them into high-priority political issues. The States must assume a renewed responsibility in finding definitive solutions to these issues that may become grave destabilizing elements in our societies.

3. Adequate housing and the correspondent services are a basic human right (Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements, 1976, Section III-8 and Chapter II-A.3), as well as the continuous improving of the living conditions (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, A. 11).

4. Latin America and the Caribbean fully adhere to the concept of sustainable development of Agenda 21, approved in the Rio Summit on Environment and development, and reminds that the overall objective in the field of human settlements is to improve not only their environmental but also social and economic quality and the living and working environments of all people.

5. Human settlements are an integral part of the social and economic development issues and a realistic approach cannot dissociate them.

6. The non-recognition of these principles, that have already been sanctioned by the international community, would amount to a regression and a partial view of the human settlements phenomenon.

7. Latin America and the Caribbean share the same problems of other developing countries in the field of human settlements; as they, for historical and geographical reasons, present a specific political, economic and social reality that must be taken into account when considering all the issues before the conference.

8. A positive approach to the human settlements questions in Latin America and the Caribbean must incorporate the concept of rural and urban development in an integral manner due to the incidence that rural problems have in the urbanization phenomenon and its consequences.

9. Taking into consideration that 60 per cent of the urban population in the Latin American and Caribbean cities lives in poverty conditions mainly localized in squatter human

settlements, the use of a predominantly quantitative approach through indicators is not the most appropriate way to understand the Latin American reality. This reality has been aggravated by the appearance of new phenomena, such as the internal massive displacement of population.

10. Latin America and the Caribbean have important experiences in the field of human settlements, including the decentralization with regard to the central power, the strengthening of local governments and the growing importance of community associations in human settlements. The countries of the region are persuaded of the importance of the promotion and interchange of these experiences.

11. International cooperation is a fundamental tool to finding efficient solutions to human settlements issues. In this particular, Latin American and Caribbean countries recalled the decisions of the General Assembly in its resolutions 47/180 for a mobilization, at national and international levels, of the necessary additional human, technical and financial resources aiming at the execution of the Agenda 21 programmes.

12. The guidelines herewith formulated are built on and enrich the agreement by the Latin American and Caribbean Ministers of Housing and Urban Development at their Second Meeting in Cartagena de Indias (Declaration of Cartagena, 1-2 December 1993).